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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 000221

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: GAZA HUMANITARIAN UPDATE - FEBRUARY 2

REF: JERUSALEM 216

1. (SBU) Summary: Kerem Shalom crossing, the Karni conveyor belt, and Nahal Oz fuel transfer station are open on February 1. Water and sewage services in Gaza remain limited. The power station reduced its power output on January 31 due to a lack of sufficient fuel. The internal distribution of medicine and supplies has been chaotic and slow, according to WHO contacts. Contacts reported that Hamas paid January salaries to an estimated 23,000 employees in Gaza. Gaza banks continue to experience a lack of liquidity, as the PMA's January 7 request to the GOI for the transfer of currency remains outstanding. End summary.

Crossings

2. (SBU) February 2: Crossings are partially open. Logistics contacts estimated that approximately 110 truckloads will move through Kerem Shalom crossing, while 70-80 truckloads of wheat and grains are expected to enter via Karni's conveyor belt. Nahal Oz is open to industrial fuel for the power plant and some cooking gas. Erez is open to certain international travelers only, and Rafah was open to 5-10 truckloads of medical equipment.

3. (SBU) February 1: Around 115 truckloads entered Kerem Shalom and 90 truckloads of wheat came through Karni's conveyor belt. Around 240,000 liters of industrial fuel for the power plant and an estimated 50 tons of cooking gas passed via Nahal Oz fuel transfer station. Rafah terminal was open to five truckloads of medical supplies. Erez was open for international travelers with special co-ordination only.

Health

4. (SBU) WHO contacts in Gaza reported on February 2 that some Gaza hospitals and clinics have not received certain donated medicines supplies over the last week due to a lack of organization in the public health sector.

Water and sanitation

5. (SBU) OCHA contacts in Gaza reported on February 2 that most Gaza families have running water from the mains in their homes, but that nearly 30 percent of Gaza's population has water from the mains less than two hours/day. Gaza water and sanitation sector officials reported a shortage of water tankers for distributing water to communities. They also said that there are 43 projects in Gaza awaiting materials (e.g. pumps, pipes, fittings, motors, etc.). IDF operations

in Gaza caused approximately USD six million in damage to the water and sewage networks and destroyed 180 agricultural wells, according to sector officials.

¶6. (SBU) OCHA contacts in Gaza reported that that cement in Gaza is in short supply and selling for the equivalent of USD 75/bag. Those contacts confirmed that the GOI has not allowed significant cement imports to Gaza since June 2007, and that the lack of construction materials has made most repairs to major infrastructure unfeasible.

Electricity/Fuel

¶7. (SBU) The power plant is generating 30 MW on February 2, according to plant management. Contacts said that plant output dropped from 70 MW to 30 MW on January 31 due to fuel shortages. (Note: The plant burns 140,000 liters/day of industrial fuel when generating 30 MW. End note.) Gaza contacts said on February 2 that most Gaza City homes have 6-12 hours/day of electricity, while the remaining areas in Gaza experience 12-18 hours/day, as they are less dependent on power plant output.

Hamas and PA salaries

¶8. (SBU) The Hamas-controlled government in Gaza paid the January salaries of an estimated 23,000 employees, according to UN contacts in Gaza on February 2. The payments, reportedly made in US dollars, were distributed in post offices throughout Gaza on January 30-February 1.

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¶9. (SBU) Palestine Monetary Authority (PMA) contacts reported on February 2 that banks in Gaza face the same lack of liquidity as in December 2008, when the PMA was forced to shut them down for a week. The PMA said banks in Gaza will not be able to disburse salaries for 77,000 PA employees without an additional infusion of currency from their West Bank branches.

WALLES